

Potpourri of Ideas

Here are some ideas that will add to your list of ways to get the water safety messages to the public when you have little funds in the budget.

Rural Electric Magazines

Many states have rural electric companies that publish colorful magazines each month and mail them free to their customers. This is an excellent way to tell your water safety story. Normally the staff is so small they need "stringer" articles. Call the editor to see if a writer might head in your direction or when he/she will print a water safety story from your lake.

Weekly Fishing Reports

Some Districts provide the media and anglers a weekly fishing report on each lake's water level, what type fish can be caught on which type of bait and the lake's telephone number. This is a great tool to add your water safety messages in. Suggestion: add these water safety tips to the middle of the copy something. Usually the editor's blade cuts from the bottom up. Also, rotate the messages from week to week so the readers receive fresh data.

Park Bench Advertising

At many malls and other highly trafficked locations, park bench entrepreneurs construct these to bring messages to the public. Contact the bench owner. It is possible there could be an open bench spot that could be donated, or one of the advertisers might let you have part of his/her bench space when it is replaced.

Airport Corridors Advertising

How many times have you walked by beautiful, large, colorful photo/art posters in the airport passageways? These spaces are contracted out to one company, usually. Businesses pay to have their ad there. The airport PR department or corporate communications person will give you the contact's name, address, and phone number.

It will be difficult to get one entire corridor space donated, but, like park benches, one of the advertisers might give you a spot on their board for a water safety message.

Cereal Box Top Space

Cereal boxes appear on many breakfast tables across the land. So, why not get your life jacket PSA slick on the top flap of a cereal box? That way, every time the box is opened or closed the water safety message continues reinforcing your theme. It's a nationwide effort. Are you the person who makes contact with the cereal company for donated space? The box tops have space. Many times their 800-telephone number is on the box along with their address.

Halftime Souvenirs

At many high school and college basketball games, cheerleaders toss keepsakes up and into the crowds. These mementos range from small rubber basketballs to footballs to drinking cups. Each has the team name, logo and the school's colors. A local company sponsors these souvenirs and receives a side panel to advertise on. There is space for your life jacket ad. Call the school anchor the advertiser to get the producer's name and phone number.

Satellite TV Space

America's countryside is dotted with satellite dishes. The Corps is missing this opportunity to get our water safety messages to the world. Organizations — like the American Red Cross — get satellite time donated, and the Corps can, too. Are you going to take up the satellite challenge?

Letters to Editor/Op-Ed Articles

Newspapers, radio and televisions stations provide space for editorials. Newspapers print Letters to the Editor and sometimes guest columns on the Opinion/Editorial pages. You can use this space to get your water safety messages out,

too. Rarely will you hear a guest editorialist over the radio. The reason is people simply do not realize this airtime is available. Television has two ways: letter to the station manager and on-camera. Your choice.

Soft Drink Cup/Bottle/Can Space

Chain-owned fast food restaurants serve soft drinks in cups emblazoned with their logos. Lake visitors many times stop by these facilities en route to the water and carry the cups into the boat. Wouldn't it be great to see the life jacket slick, "Don't Swim Alone, Take Me Along" brightly printed on these cups? Start at the local restaurant and obtain the corporate PR person's name and telephone number. Some are printed at the regional level. Likewise, soft drink bottles and cans are everywhere. How are you going to get the water safety message on them? Is this your challenge for the coming year?

Locally Produced District Publications

Each District prints many publications with empty space. Why not fill some of those empty pages with water safety messages? Let's see, will your first District pub be the in-house telephone directory?

Post Office Cancellation Stamp

For the grand finale why not get the post office to create a special letter cancellation stamp with your water safety message on it? You must have a real special event, like the district's 100th birthday, or your lake's 50th anniversary, but it can be done. Once you've found what you want to commemorate, call the local post office and get the person's name and telephone number. There will be a nominal fee for the hand cancellation stamp and the machine stamp cost, about \$150. The machine stamp is used to run through all the letters/packages at one post office for one day. It might be possible to use the hand stamp at your big event. The post office will require a letter, because they only grant a few of these special stamps. Plan four to six months in advance. Also, the post office will require exactly what you want on the stamp.

Hillside Life Jacket

Just when you thought you had heard of every water safety technique possible. When was the last time you've seen a huge life jacket emblazoned on the side of an embankment, highlighting a "PFD" inside a 60'x64' life jacket and "Wear It" displayed next to it? This innovative idea was accomplished at minimum cost and achieved maximum publicity. There are three major factors that needed thorough researching: type of paint to use, equipment, and design. Guidelines were also made for the lettering. The entire life jacket (PFD) was "undercoated" with white. Then the letters were stenciled. Bright orange was used to outline the letters and topcoat the PFD. Finally, black paint was used for a belt, the letters "PFD" and to outline the entire PFD. The media were notified. Both print and electronic reporters covered the billboard. After four weeks, the message faded due to vegetation growth and wearing off of the paint. Therefore, the "billboard" was repainted. No layout or stencil was required to repaint the graphic. The entire message was repainted in a fraction of the time.